

A  
Funeral-Sermon:  
Occasion'd by the  
**DEATH**  
OF

*Mrs. Mary Gravener.*

Preached at  
**CROSBY-SQUARE,**  
Novemb. 30, 1707.

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By **DANIEL WILLIAMS,**  
Minister of the Gospel.

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LONDON, Printed for *John Lawrence,*  
at the Angel in the Poultry. 1708.

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## EZEKIEL xxiv. 16.

*Son of Man, behold, I take away from thee the Desire of thine Eyes with a Stroke; yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, &c.*

**W**E are met together upon an Occasion, which *exemplifies* most of my Text in Fact; and speaks aloud to all of us, as well as to them who most feel the Sharpness of this Providence; the wise and blessed God has executed on a *Gospel-Propheet* that sudden Breach which he here denounceth between *Ezekiel* and his Wife.

We have in this Verse,

I. A Preface, *Son' of Man, behold.*

II. The Providence whereby he is exercised, *I take away the Desire of thine Eyes with a Stroke.*

III. A Charge as to his Behaviour under it, *Yet shalt thou neither mourn nor weep.* Which tho peculiar to the Propheet, as to its Extent, yet prescribes to all of us Moderation in the like Trials.

I. A Preface, *Son of Man*, behold ; wher e I shall consider both, 1. *Son of Man* ; and, 2. The Import of the Word *Behold*. This *Son of Man* falls under a twofold Consideration.

1. *Son of Man*, as a *meer Designation of the holy Prophet Ezekiel*, q. d. “ *Ezekiel* my Prophet whom I have called by Office to transact in my Name with this People, towards thee I’ll exert my Sovereignty ; and tho thou art faithful, yet for my People’s Instruction, I’ll take away thy Wife with a Stroke ; that by this Breach, and thy Behaviour under it, they may be convinc’d, that I’ll not spare them in what they account most desirable, but my Judgments shall make halte, and fill them with such Amazement, as shall prevent the outward Tokens of Sorrow, yea, overwhelm them in a confus’d Stupefaction. You find it so apply’d and explain’d, ver. 21, 22, 23. *Behold, I will profane my Sanctuary, the Excellency of your Strength, the Desire of your Eyes, and that which your Soul pittieth ; and your Sons and your Daughters shall fall by the Sword, and you shall not mourn or weep, but you shall pine away for your Iniquities.*

1 *Observ.* Neither Sacred Offices nor real Holiness exempt Men from the Loss of those

those outward Comforts, which they *most esteem*.

Here *Ezekiel*, a holy Prophet, is bereav'd of the Desire of his Eyes. *Abraham* buryeth *Sarah*; and *Aaron* beholds his Sons re-<sup>Lev. 10.</sup> mov'd by a surprizing Stroke. *David* cannot<sup>2.</sup> preserve his over-valu'd *Absolom*, nor *Job* his Children, tho he offer'd *Sacrifices for them* <sup>Job 1. 5.</sup> *Day by Day*. Calamities in this Life are<sup>19.</sup> not peculiar to the Wicked, nor are Saints exempted from Poverty, Reproach, Sickness, Widowhood, or dying Childless: Their Grace secures not Riches, Credit, Health, Wife, or Children; they hold *greater things* by a *more* certain Tenure, than they can pretend to Temporals. Yet these are not remov'd without a Reason; For,

I R. The best may *forfeit* their Comforts-

*Eli* by sinful Indulgence lost his Sons,<sup>1 Sam. 3.</sup> and God remark'd his Folly by their Death,<sup>13.</sup> to warn others from the like *Connivance* at Children's Faults. What has God taken away, which was not abus'd beforehand as an Occasion of Sin, or not fruitfully us'd by due Improvement? There are in the holiest Ministers such Remains of Corruption, as may betray them into such Forfeitures as God beholds, and their



own Conscience in time shall charge them with, tho others do not perceive them. Who then must not grant, that they who are capable of forfeiting their choicest Enjoyments, may well account them loseable, and find them so?

2 R. The best may need the Removal of their dearest Comforts. When the Case is so, the *better* a Man is, the more certain is the Loss; for his Interest in God's Covenant assures him of what is necessary to bring him safe to Heaven: On this Account David saith, *in very Faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.*

This Necessity becomes more manifest, when our Enjoyments have proved a Snare to us, even Wife and Children oft prove thus, by alienating our Affections from God, or abating our bountiful Disposition to the Poor, or rendring our Minds distracted in God's Worship, and apter to neglect it; or making us more covetous, or backward to leave this World, or less forward to expose our selves for the Cause of Christ. Other Blessings become an Occasion of Sin to us, as Riches, Health and Honour, *when* we grow proud, vain, secure, too much pleas'd with things *sensible*, and forgetful of Death, and eternal things. When this is the Fruit of our Comforts,

if

if *depriving* us of them be the aptest Means (as commonly it is so) of healing our Distempers, and recovering us to a better Frame; the Loss of them is a beneficial *Mercy*, and their Continuance would be a Judgment.

There may be *equal* need that a Comfort be removed, tho we shall not fully perceive it, perhaps before it's discovered by the Light of another World. So it is when God *prevents* that Evil which he foresaw would attend the Continuance of what we desired, or *prepares* us by the Loss of it, for some future eminent Service, great Suffering, or singular Benefit. Here in God's infallible Foresight provides against our Wants, before we are sensible of them.

3 R. The Relations of the holiest Persons are *fading* and *mortal*. *All Flesh is Grass, and withereth away as the Flower thereof.* Isa. 40. 6, 8.  
 Departed Relations were not only under the Sentence of Death, which would force them to die in time; but they have oft in them the Seeds of an early Death. When it's so, their Days cannot be prolong'd to old Age without a *Miracle*; and has the greatest Saint a Right to expect Miracles, or the Faith which was proper to them? The Promise is, that God will *with-*

*Pfal. 84. 11* *with-hold no good thing from him who walketh uprightly.* But not that the *same* thing is *alway* good, or that it shall be *alway* continued, when it is transitory in its *Nature*.

4 R. The Inhabitants of *this World*, however good, are liable to share in some Calamities; by which God witnesseth against the *Apostacy* of Mankind.

*Job. 14. 1.* All are the Race of fallen Man, and as *such, are of few Days, and full of Trouble.*

The holy God has left some Marks of Dislike upon the very Earth, the Brute, and all Mankind. Tho Believers are pardoned as to *destructive* Punishments, yet Remains of Sin, Death, uncertain Enjoyment of present good Things, want of solid Satisfaction therein, and many other Afflictions, are some of the *Troubles*

*Job. 5. 7.* they are as naturally *born* to, as a *Spark flies upwards*; and the best not exempted whiles they are Pilgrims. This Stage of *Sin* shall not be totally free from *Sorrow*, nor that appear a *Heaven*, before a Conflagration, which join'd with *Hell* in a rebellious Revolt. The most assured Saint must be remov'd to heavenly Places, before *all Tears shall be wiped away from his Eyes.*

*Inf. 1.* We ought to censure none as *wicked*, because bereaved of the most desirable *common Blessings.* What



What a graceless Man may *enjoy* with God's Hatred, another may *lose*, and yet abide in God's Favour. Yea that may be taken away from a good Man in *Mercy*, which is continued to another Man in *Judgment*. *Job* was rather tried than punished, and yet was stripp'd of all his Estate, Children, and Health; nevertheless his Friends are blamed as greatly *cen-* Job. 42.7.  
*sorious*, for suspecting his Integrity, because so remarkably distress'd; yea, tho his Anguish extorted many indecent Complaints.

Sometimes God's Punishments upon a Man are in such *bright* Characters, that *Psal. 64.*  
we consider *not his Doings wisely*, if we read 7. 9.  
not that Man's *Offence*. But they rashly pretend to stand in God's Cabinet, who by outward Calamities judge of any Man's State. Such *Cynicks* would be more cruel to poor *Lazarus*, than the *Dogs* who lick'd his Sores; and if they know any Faults by themselves, I would have them consider, that the *least Sin* is a surer Sign, than the *greatest Affliction*, that any Man is *wicked*.

*Inf. 2.* The *best* Men should so prepare for outward Troubles, that the greatest may not *surprize* them. As you have spiritual Enemies, that call you alway to be  
armed,

armed, so you are obnoxious to many worldly Troubles, any of which will be apt to sink you, if you provide not before hand to bear it. I exhort you not to anticipate Afflictions for *needless Torment*, but so to reckon on your common Lot, as to be *weaned* from what you over-value, to be more entirely *resigned* to God's Will, to live more by Faith *on Christ*, and things above; to be *better* stock'd with Faith, Humility, Self-denial and Patience, and with such Gospel-Considerations, as contribute to a fixed *Sedateness and Serenity of Mind*. What the Gospel-Covenant does not *preserve* you from, it's Christian Prudence to be fitted to endure; and what it promiseth not to continue, a Preparedness to *quit it* will make the Loss more easy.

2 Obs. God's Ministers oft suffer for the Peoples Instruction; *ver. 24.* we read, *Ezekiel is unto you a sign*: He endured this sore Loss for *their* Warning. God has a sovereign Right to use his Creatures for his Purposes, as far as is compensated by the Being he gave them, and continues; (he is too good and just to exceed this, except as a Judge against Delinquents) in that Sense *all are his Servants*, for he is universal Proprietor.

Psal. 119.  
91.

His

His peculiar People by antecedent and promised Benefits, are still more obliged to *devote* themselves to him ; and should they murmur at his Disposals, they bring the Sincerity of their *Dedication* under doubt, and express a Contempt of the super-abundant Blessings which they expect, or else would unjustly hope for 'em.

*Ministers* are chosen by God in a special manner, and in *accepting* the Office to which he calls them, they consent that he should serve himself of them, by warning and directing others as he appoints, and delivering his Mind, whatever it may *expose* them to : And as they are to suffer Persecution *from Men*, for publishing his Truth ; so upon the same reason, they must consent to bear such Afflictions by *God's Hand*, as he knows will enforce his Truth, and make them most effectual to those among whom they are employ'd. Moreover, what of that kind is inflicted on his Ministers, is the likelier Warning to *many*, because they are more noted as *publick* Persons ; and the more convincing, both because they ought to be more *innocent* ; and being consecrated to God in a *special* manner, what he lays on them, is a greater Signification of his *Purposes* concerning those whom God



appoints them to transact with and represent.

*Exh. 1.* Let *People* learn to profit by the afflictive Providences of God towards their *Ministers*.

Their Sickneſs, their *ſignal Loſs* of Relations, &c. are deſigned for your Benefit, as well as their Doctrine. *Iſrael* had prevented the ſeverer Strokes of God upon themſelves, if they had received Inſtruction by the Calamity on *Ezekiel*, in this Death of his Wife. As God gave in *St. Paul* a Pattern of *his Long-ſuffering*, to encourage all that ſhould believe; ſo he gives in all his afflicted Miniſters an Example, to awaken all that provoke him by their Tranſgreſſions. Judgments oft *begin* with his Prophets, to inforce their Miniſtry. May you be excited to reform by God's taking away *your Miniſter's* Wife with a Stroke, leaſt he remove what's moſt deſirable in your Eyes, and ſmite you in what will be moſt afflictive. God by Trials and Temptations fitteth us to preach, ſo by them you ſhould be more enclined to benefit by hearing.

2. But the Term, *Son of Man*; beſides a Delignation of *Ezekiel's* Perſon, may be intended as an Expreſſion to *keep him humble* under his eminent Revelations. As no

Pro.

Prophets had so many and remarkable Visions as he; so no Prophet is so oft spoken to under this Title, *Son of Man*.

*Obs. 3.* God is pleas'd to use fit Methods to keep his *privileg'd* Servants humble.

Is *Ezekiel* favour'd with more abundant Visions than others? The wise God minds him of his *low* Original, calling him, *Son of Man* so frequently: I think scarce a Chapter without that Appellation: *g. d.* "Thou I am thus familiar with thee, be not high minded; for thou art not of a sublimer Nature, or better *Descent* than thy Fellow-Creatures, who are not so entrusted. Thou art made of Earth, thou wer't born in Sin, and must shortly die as well as others. It's my Condescension, not thy Merit, that thou art thus privileged: Thou art but that *Worm*, Man, tho thus con- Job 25. 6. versant with *Angels*, therefore be not elated in thy Opinion of *thy self*, nor unthankful for this undeserved Privilege, nor despise thou others.

Shall *Jacob* prevail in his *Wrestlings* with Gen. 32. 25, 26. God! He must go *lame* by a *Touch that disjoint's his Thigh*, least he should ascribe it to his greater Strength. And a *Thorn in 2 Cor. 12. the Flesh*; the Messenger of Satan is given to buffet *Paul*, least he should be

*exalted above measure through the abundance of Revelations.*

*Exh.* Improve all the Methods God takes to keep you *humble*, under your Advantages. God *considers our Frame*, and therefore as he with-holds not such Gifts and Encouragements as are proportion'd to our Employments and Difficulties, so he *hides Pride from Man*, and takes care to prevent our being puffed up by our Advantages. Peculiarly eminent Favours, Gifts, or Success, are very usual *Fore-runners* of some sharp Exercises. God, who sees our Inclinations to Pride, takes such humbling ways to obviate our Abuse of his Talents. Nor should it be thought needless as to *us*, when God saw those ways meet to be taken with such eminent Saints, as *Jacob, Ezekiel; and Paul.* In them we see that neither strong Graces nor the holiest Offices set Men beyond the *Usefulness* of humbling Cautions; therefore let not us esteem them useless, nor make them so, but quietly submit, and carefully answer God's end, by subduing all proud Thoughts, keeping lowly and humble under all our Attainments, and suspicious of our selves, lest these become a Snare.

2. I go on to the second part of the Preface, *Behold; Son of Man, behold; i. e.*

at-



attend and consider what I say, and what I perform ; it deserves Attention, for it is certain, it's fit, tho' it's also strange : *Mark well, and lay it to Heart.* Ezek. 44. 5 I shall not further enlarge on this, than to mind you, that to disregard the Word or Works of God, is a *Contempt* of his Sacred Majesty ; and to *despise* his Chastisements is the way to bring us under severer Distresses, as well as to render those which we feel *unprofitable*. Prov. 3. 11. Moreover, we are especially to take Notice of that in every Providence, which *most* tends to excite our Compliance with the Design and Voice of God therein, *viz.* whatever in the Providence is fittest to alarm, strike deepest, and abide longest, as the Surprising *Suddenness* of a Relation's Death, or the like ; for by such things God puts an *Accent* on his Instructions, and a penetrating Edge to his Rebukes. Nevertheless, we may observe, that we are naturally so *unattentive*, so apt to mistake, so backward to learn and comply, that God sees Reason to cry to a holy Prophet, under this most awakening Providence, *Behold ; Son of Man, behold.* How much more Cause have we to take heed, that we be not *regardless* and *unattentive* to God's Warnings and Dispensations. This leads me to the second General Head. II.

II. The Providence whereby *Ezekiel* is exercis'd: *I take away from thee the Desire of thine Eyes with a Stroke.* It is, 1. A dark Dispensation. 2. A very awful Dispensation.

1. A very dark Dispensation till God unriddled it. The Prophet might ask, as the People did, *v. 19. Wilt thou not tell us, what these things are to us, that thou doest so?*

“Such a Breach on thy Servant who is faithfully discharging his Trust, and doing thy Work: Such a Wound made in the most tender Part, and yet all Marks of Sorrow forbidden. My Wife to be taken away by a Plague, and I not mourn! it was a perplexing Matter at first View, but God explains the whole, *ver. 21. to the 27th*; and then it was very consistent, and easily accounted for. It's a prophetick Emblem, to enforce that Message; for the Success of which, *Ezekiel* was by Office to do and bear the utmost; and who, from his Love to *Israel*, was willing to have them reclaimed, tho by a Method so afflictive to himself.

4 Obs. The darkest Dispensation in due time will appear to be wise and just, yea, and gracious towards all who are upright.

Ps. 97. 2.

At present, Clouds and Darknes are round about our God, yet still Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne.

This

This Saints *believe*, when God's Dealings are most obscure, and they least able to solve their Difficulties. The Providences of God were such, as *Jeremiah* thought he might *plead* with God about their Irreconcilableness with, and seeming Contradiction to his Justice ; yet before he will begin his Plea, he fixeth on this Conclusion, *Righteous art thou, O Lord.*

Jer. 12. 1.

Oft in *this* World good Men come to perceive, that what for some time stagger'd them, was very amiable, and best contriv'd for happy Fruits ; and they have blessed God for that as a great *Mercy*, which they long complain'd of as the sorest *Judgment*. Poor *Jacob* lived to see that *Gen. 42.* his *Joseph*, whom he lamented as dead, <sup>46.</sup> was only sent to keep his whole Family alive, and those *all things which were against him*, were but preparatory to the Embraces of that best beloved Son. *David* was so confounded at the Wicked's *Prosperity*, when himself was *plagued and chasten'd every Morning*, that he *almost* judg'd Religion and Innocence made his Case rather worse than better ; but he lives to see such Wisdom, Equity and Kindness in those Methods of Providence, as to attest, *Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a clean Heart* ; and to confess, I was as a *Beast* before

Psal. 73.  
1, 13, 22.



fore thee for ever questioning it, and much more for aspersing God's Dealings, when he might have sooner understood the Reason of them.

*Exhort.* Be assured God orders all things well, and that you shall *understand* how it is so, in what now appears *least* probable.

You ought now to conclude so concerning what's most severe or intricate; how can you do otherwise without *denying* a Providence, or *aspersing* the Perfections of God, who is the Arbitrator of it? But tho you acquiesce now in his steering the Helm in his dark Retirements, let Christ's Answer to *Peter* add to your Satisfaction, *Joh. 13: 7.* *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter, in this World as far as necessary, but be sure fully in the other World.* What seem'd *here* most hideous, terrible, and unaccountable, will *there* afford Matter of the highest Praise and affecting Admiration.

2. It was a very *awful* Dispensation, I *take away the Desire of thine Eyes with a Stroke.*

I shall represent it in a short *Paraphrase* upon the several Parts, which are plac'd as *Steps* of Aggravation.

1. *I, I thy God, whose Favour thou most valuest, whose Anger thou most darest,*  
whose

whose Power is irresistible ; *I*, from whom thou lookest for kind Dealings, relyest on for all Benefits, and from whom alone thou expectest Relief in all Troubles, upon thy Addresses to me. Yet, O *Ezekiel*, it's *I* who pronounce and execute this hard Sentence.

2. *Take away from thee* : I remove her not at a little Distance, but as far as one World is from the other. I take her away not for a short while, but till Time shall be no more ; so as never more to be enjoy'd *here*. I do not wound but *kill* her, and lodge her among departed Souls. It's not a Limb, but her Life, her Soul that I take away, which will make a Carcass odious.

3. *The Desire of thine Eyes*. Not a remote Relation, or one of thy Children, but the *Wife* of thy Bosom, thy second *self* : Not a grievous provoking, unpleasing, contemptible or ungodly Wife ; but one who was *fit* to be the Desire of thy Eyes, who art a wise Man and a holy Prophet : Not one that was pleasing for sometimes, but is since *alter'd* : No, it is a Wife, who is now the Desire of thy Eyes, now so, and like to be still growing more amiable and pleasing. I take her away in the midst of your mutual Satisfa-

ction, and pleasing Society ; when you reckon on a long and happy Life together, as mutual Comforts in your Pilgrimage, and Helps for Heaven. *Then, then,* I make such a Separation between you, as to put an End to your refreshing *Expectations*, as well as to past and present Enjoyments. Oh *Ezekiel*, her Person, her Cares, her Love, her Gifts, her Graces, are no longer helpful, except by Reviews, which will as much heighten as allay thy Grief. It's *her* I take to a Place whence she can't be recall'd by all thy Wants, Complaints or Prayers. It's *her* whose Place will be always empty, wherever thou didst expect to find her with greatest Satisfaction.

4. *With a Stroke* : Which notes both,  
 1. the Suddenness of her Death ; and,  
 2. the Severity of the Stroke. 1. The Suddenness of her Death : Neither thou nor she shall have any *Leisure*. She shall have no Warning to secure Heaven, if she hitherto neglected it ; nor thou further time to wean thy self, or be furnish'd with more Patience to bear her Departure. The Dispatch is quick ; *ver. 18.* (*So I spake to the People in the Morning, and at Even my Wife died ;*) thou shalt be about my Work in the *Morning*, and find a dead Wife



Wife by the *Evening*. 2. The *Severity* of the Stroke. It was but *one* Stroke, but <sup>1 Sam. 26,</sup> that is a killing one. He smote so, as not <sup>8.</sup> to need to smite the *second time*. Husband and Wife, Body and Soul, are separated by this *one* Blow of God's giving. It killed as certainly, and more speedily than the *Plague*, as the *Hebrew* Word signifies. I shall from this Paraphrase collect some *Observations*.

5 *Obs.* *Afflictive* Losses are under God's *Power* and *Management*. He has a *Right* to take away our Comforts, and *his Hand* removes them, whenever they are taken away. He saith to *Ezekiel*, *I take away* the Desire of thine Eyes. He may do so without Controul, or Cause of Complaint, for he alienated not his own Property in what he granted us the Use of for a time, and that under certain *Regulations*. It's our Mercy, that *none* below him can spoil us of any thing without his Permission. The *Devil* could not take away a *Sheep*, much less the Children of *Job*, till God permitted it, and allowed his Wind to subserve their Death for his own wise and just Ends. On which account *Job* saith, *God has taken away*, tho it's the *Devil* was <sup>Job 1. 21.</sup> the great Mover, by soliciting God's Permission, inclining the *Sabeans* and *Chaldeans*,

*deans*, and making use of Fire and Wind, as the means of *Job's* Calamities. Instruments are *guilty* as far as they violate Rules of Justice or Mercy ; but tho God abhors their gratifying their own Lusts, which is all they *design* by the Injuries they resolve to act ; yet he over-rules their Thoughts and Agency, by determining them to *one* Object, Time and Means, rather than another, as may best subserve his holy Purposes, whether for the Trial or Punishment of him who suffers. So that whether Devils or Men be Instruments, or that we are bereaved by his more *immediate* Hand, God is to be acknowledg'd ; and as to every other sort of Rebuke, we are sure, *there*

Amos 3. 6. *is no Evil in the City which the Lord has not done.*

*Inf. 1.* They who are impatient under Losses fret against the *Hand of God*. There our Quarrels terminate, tho we excuse our selves, because second Causes are more *distinctly* present to our Minds. But tho it may seem too foolish and horrid to impeach God *directly* of Weakness, Injustice, Cruelty or Folly ; yet we really do so in our fretful Complaints, and still more *directly* so, as God's Hand is more immediate in the Affliction. *Jonah* pettishly wished in himself to *die*, and said, *It's bet-*

*ter*

ter for me to die than live ; and grew an-<sup>Jonah 4.1;</sup>  
gry. What was the Reason? *Nineveh*<sup>3, 8, 9.</sup>  
was spared, and that *Gourd* wither'd, of  
which he had been exceeding glad, when  
a Shadow over him. Against whom was  
*Jonah* angry in this Roile? It was against  
God, who spared the City, and prepared  
the *Worm* by which that *Gourd* had wi-  
ther'd, which had somewhat allay'd his  
Grief, under the dreaded Reproach of a false  
Prophet. It was *with God* he was angry.

So it is with us, when our Relations  
(pleasing *Gourds*) are taken away by Sick-  
ness, and we are impatient at it. For as  
this Impatience is *Anger*, so it is directed  
against God— against him for *sending* the  
Disease, or *not* preventing it, or *not* heal-  
ing it. If it be not against God that we  
are angry, against whom is it? Could any  
one hinder God's sending the Disease, or  
prevent or heal it without him, however  
it came? If you think you are angry only  
at your *selves* for this or that Omission of  
Means, for the Recovery of the Deceased ;  
or for your otherwise *provoking* God to  
take them away ; I answer, as far as that  
Omission was *voluntary*, it was your Fault ;  
but if it was not voluntary, and that you  
acted to the *best* of your Knowledge, you  
are unjust to be angry with your self.  
But



But suppose it was voluntary, and so a *Fault* ; and that you by *other* Sins provoked God to remove your Relation ; yet generally the Impatient, by what they call Anger at themselves for these Sins, do but frame an Excuse to cover their being angry against God. For they are not so displeased with themselves for *other* Sins, tho' *greater* ; they oft fret at their *Loss*, when they think not of their Sin with any Remorse ; and much sooner *forget* their Sin than their lost Friend ; nor does the hope of the *Pardon* of their Sin quiet them, when they remember their departed Relation. Restrain therefore your Impatience, lest you be found fretting against your just, good and faithful God.

*Inf. 2.* They who profit not by afflictive Losses, *hear not the Voice of God's Rod.*

Our God is infinite in Wisdom and Goodness ; therefore he has a good *End* in every Rebuke. That End is his Peoples *Profit* ; and that *kind* of Rebuke in every Circumstance, is the *fittest* means to effect this profitable End. He is a God of *Love*, and therefore *does not willingly afflict*, nor chastize for his *Pleasure*. No, it is to make us *Partakers of his Holiness*, by mortifying our Sins, renewing our Minds,

exci-

Lam. 3. 33  
Heb. 12.  
10.

exciting our Graces, weaning us from sensible Things, and *sitting* us for greater Service and Enjoyments. When you answer not these Purposes, you refuse to *bear the Rod, and him who appointed it*; Mic. 6. 9. i.e. The *Affliction*, in the *Kind* and *Nature* of it, teacheth some things; and God, who appoints it, calls you thereby to all which you have need to learn. But if you profit not, you hear neither the Voice of the Rod, tho enforc'd by God's *appointing* it; nor that which God *further* speaketh to you, when prepared by the Rod to hearken.

Oh what Obstinacy and Folly do they shew, who improve not by Afflictions! *Obstinacy* in not yielding, when the Almighty is by sharp Methods forcing them to submit. *Folly*! in not only losing their Comforts without any Benefit, but by increased Guilt exposing themselves to *sover* Breaches; or to be left to themselves as irreclaimable. This last is the most terrible to all, except very obdurate Wretches; for when God once saith, *Let them alone*; it's next to that Sentence, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire*. Hof. 4. 17.

6 Obs. Death takes away Persons from all things in *this lower World*. I take away the Desire of thine Eyes.

We

We say of our dead Friends, they are taken away, and they are departed. Death is thus expressed in the Scriptures. *Iſa. 57. 1. The Righteous is taken away from the Evil* *2 Tim. 4. to come, the Time of my Departure is at* *Luke 2. 29. hand ; now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace.* The reason of such Expressions is evident ; for when Persons die, they leave Estates and Dwellings : These know them no more ; they quit their present Work, and the Business of this present Life ; their honourable Places are empty. The Figure they made is become a Cypher.

Death separates the Soul from the Body till the Resurrection, when God shall bring out of his *Repositories* that of our present Body, as shall be sufficient to make it *our* former individual Body *risen again* ; tho made incorruptible, spiritual, glorious, and immortal, by the indwelling Spirit. When Men die, they leave this Earth with its Concernments, and are removed to another Region, which has its proper Objects, Society, and Employments. *David* may be judg'd to look beyond his bodily Health, and to be desirous to enter into the unseen World in the best Frame of Spirit, and afraid to quit this under Backslidings, when he crieth, *O spare* *Pſal. 39. 13 me, that I may recover Strength before I go hence*



hence and be no more. But whether Body or Soul, or both be intended, he reckons that by Death *he went* from this World, and was no more to continue an *Inhabitant* of it.

*Inf. 1.* He is *foolish* in the worst Sense, who takes his *Portion* in the things of this World.

There needs no other Reason to demonstrate it besides this, he must *leave* all these things behind, when himself must live for ever in another Place. He will be taken away; and *carrieth nothing with him* Ps. 49. 17. *when he dieth, his Glory shall not descend after him.* It's the Character of wicked Men, *they have their Portion in this Life*: By Ps. 17. 14. God's just Judgment they have nothing but Misery after this Life, which limiteth their Portion to a short Compass. By their own *Carnality* and *Folly* they take their Portion in the *Things* of Life. So that the Character declares them both miserable and vile Men, wretched in their *End*, and sordid and sottish in their *Temper*, which can place their Happiness in what's so far *below* themselves in Worth and Duration; so far from the End of their Creation, and the true Good whereof they are capable, and which they forfeit for the sake of these *Trifles*, that so inordinately

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gratify them no otherwise than as they are agreeable to their brutish and devilish  
 1 Pet. 2. 11 Lustings, which *war against their Souls.*

In what Confusion will a Man in this State be, when he shall hear that surprising Challenge from an irresistible God? *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee.* And then, *Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* Whosoever shall enjoy them, the dead Fool has so lost his Propriety in, and Benefit by them, that the *rich* Man cannot procure a little *Water to cool his Tongue.*

Luke 12.  
20.

Luke 16.  
24.

Therefore pray for Wisdom, that you may be effectually convinc'd of the Vanity of Riches, Friends, Honour, and all the Things of this World, so as to *moderate* your Love to, Pursuits after, and Delight in them. Rebuke all *Trust* in them; and apply to this, before your *Season* of providing a better Portion is past; for the Emptiness you'll then experience, will only aggravate your tormenting *Disappointment*, and that for ever.

*Inf. 2.* Mens greatest Concern, is to what Place *they are carried*, when taken away from hence.

You are not annihilated, but removed. When you go out of *this* World, you go into another, of which we know certainly

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no more than is told us by *Divine Revelation*. But by the Word of God we are assured, that when you are taken away, you'll be *carried into Abraham's Bosom*, or Luke 16. imprison'd in a State of a lesser Misery, <sup>22.</sup> expecting a full Destruction in Hell. What Care and Concern becomes us in a State of *Trial*, when the Issues are so extremely different, as compleated Happiness and Misery? Oh unbelieving Soul, these are Realities; and all things compar'd therewith, will soon appear scarce worth a Thought. Ought you not then with Sollicitousness often ask, Whither am I going? *Where* must I for ever be?

Saints esteem themselves here to be *Pilgrims*, because they look for a *better Country*. <sup>Heb. 11. 13, 16.</sup> Whereas the Sensual eat, drink, and pass their Time away; but dare not think of any State beyond the present. *Heaven* they cannot hope for, so as to make any serious Enquiry into the Grounds of their Hopes, for they know they are false and vain. Think of Hell they dare not, lest the Pleasures of Sin (on which they resolve) should be embitter'd by *anticipated Terrors*.

Consider where this must end; you are going towards another World, and draw nearer to it Day by Day; as a present



Life runs out, the World *to come* approacheth. Dare you leave it to an uncertain Adventure, how it shall be with you, whether Heaven or Hell receive you? Can the Unprepared be safe? Or he that never thinks or provides for a future State, be prepared for it? Or can he be prepared *at all*, who is condemn'd by the Gospel, which is the *lowest Rule* of Judgment? The decisive Sentence will not be arbitrary, but by Rule, and that *without Respect of Persons*. If that Rule were the Law of Innocence, none could escape; but tho the Gospel-Rule does admit the Salvation of all penitent Believers, yet it as truly condemns all impenitent Unbelievers; and the Lord Jesus will, as Judge, pronounce no other Sentence: By that he'll decide the Case of all Men, who liv'd under the Gospel; he'll do it *infallibly*, for he knoweth all Mens Hearts and Ways. He will execute that Sentence *effectually*, for he is Almighty; and it's as impossible to resist him, as to deceive him.

Therefore be importunate for the Assistance of the *Holy Spirit*, that you may know your State, and impartially *examine your selves*. Prove your own selves: know ye not, that Christ is in you, except you be Reprobates? He must be received by Faith as

Rom. 2.  
11, 16.

2 Cor. 13.  
5.

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an *entire Saviour*, to secure you, and to reign in your Hearts; yea, your Temper must be framed in a Conformity to his Image, or you'll be *Cast-aways* unfit to be admitted into the heavenly Mansions. Omit no longer to ask your selves, where in the unseen State shall I be lodg'd when I depart? There my Misery or Happiness will be real, endless, perfect and unmixed, which of these will be my Lot? Let all the Unconverted pray and labour *now* for sincere Grace and Holiness; delay not this a Moment, for when you go out of *this* World, you are taken away from all the Means of Grace, from all the Helps and Hopes of a saving Change. *What thy Hand findeth to do, do it with all thy Might, for there's no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave, (the State of the Dead) whither thou art going.* All thy Convictions, Contrivances and Labour there, will be unavailable to obtain that *Wisdom*, which is accompany'd with *Salvation*. Eccl. 9. 10.

7 *Obs.* The young and healthy may be suddenly surprized by Death.

I take away the Desire of thine Eyes *with a Stroke*. One sudden Blow dispatches her: All die not by cronical lingring Diseases, so frail are Men *that we are crushed before the Moth*; sooner and more easily kill'd, Job 4. 19.

kill'd, than a Moth is crushed. You know  
 Job 21. 23. not how soon you may be that *one who di-*  
*eth in his full Strength, being wholly at Ease*  
*and Quiet.* God needs not lay a long  
 Siege, but can in a Moment storm this  
 Tabernacle of *Clay*, and blow out that  
 Lamp of Life, which he wonderfully pre-  
 Ps. 66. 9. serveth every Moment; it's he who *hol-*  
*deth our Soul in Life*, that it expires not  
 with every Breath; if he *with-holds* his  
 Spirit we die. We have more Instances of  
 sudden Deaths than usual, you may be-  
 come the *next*, and will be so, if God di-  
 rect the fatal Arrow to you. He is no more  
 engaged to give you an Hour's Warning  
 than to those who had less Notice. Nor  
 are you more able than they to lengthen  
 Life one Minute, if he arrest you by Death,  
 without a Moments Summons.

*Inf.* It's our Wisdom to be *always ready* to die.

Our Redeemer's Caution belongs to us  
 in this Case, Be ye also ready, for in such  
 Mat. 24. 44. an Hour as ye think not the Son of Man co-  
 meth. Death will seize and carry you  
 hence, and you may have *no* Notice of its  
 Approach, but be surprized when likeliest  
 to live long, or doing some *vile* thing that  
 must increase its Terror. Would you die  
 prepar'd, then be never unprepar'd; for  
 you may be struck in the *Moment* of the  
 greatest



greatest Unfitness. Many that resolve to be good in *Old Age*, are taken away in their *Youth*. Too many reserve Repentance to a *sick Bed*, but are kill'd by a sudden Accident. The most watchful find dying a *great Work*, from the Sense of a strict Tribunal, and an awful Eternity. What may the heedless find it, yea, and must, if Conscience is not seared by Infidelity. Each of you are either in a State of Sin, or in a State of Grace; its needful that *both* make ready.

1. You that are in a *State of Sin*, be always ready, by getting into Christ.

*Whilst it is to Day hear his Voice, and harden not your Hearts.* He invites you, he pleads with you to repent and believe in him. As long as you reject him, by Disobedience to his Gospel-Call, you are not ready for Death; for *if you repent not you shall perish*; if you believe not, you shall *die in your Sins*. Death will be found a King of Terrors, for it brings you into a State, where you shall *feel* the Pain and Loss contain'd in the *Curse of the Law*, and the *sooner* Threatnings of the Gospel. At present your Condition is miserable, should you die *now*, you are undone for ever. There's no Safety but in flying to Christ for Refuge, as the Gospel directs; as yet he waits,

Heb. 4. 7.

Luke 13. 3.

Joh. 8. 21.

Heb. 10. 29.

waits, to morrow your Day of Grace may end, yea *this Night* your Soul may be required, trifle not; *Because there is Wrath, beware, lest he take thee away with a Stroke; then a great Ransom cannot deliver thee.*

Job 36.18.

2. You who are in a State of Grace, be alway ready, by abiding in Christ, walking worthy of him, and keeping in a good Frame.

Heb. 10.  
38.

Perseverance is as necessary as Conversion; for if any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him. This is God's Caution to prevent Apostacy; and the Connection is true between Apostacy and Ruin, tho eventually neither happen.

Mat. 25.6.

Untrimmed Lamps also will disquiet, (tho there be Oil) when a Midnight-Cry surprizeth. Decays, Doubts, and a remiss Temper, unfit a Man for Death; so do Neglects, Unfruitfulness, and every particular Fall *unrepented of*. Matters are not wisely managed, if you allow yourselves a Moment in a Practice or Frame, in which you would be loth to be found when Death arrests you; for in that Moment you may be surprized. But you shew Christian Wisdom, when you think, are, and do that *every Hour*, as if it were to be your *last*: Therefore avoid whatever

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nourisheth your Doubts, mortify your remaining Corruptions, dispatch all present Duty, fill up your Places, keep a heavenly Frame, employ your Talents faithfully for God, strengthen just Hopes, converse much with Heaven, keep up intimate Communion with God, and by Christian Growth, *add Grace to Grace*, as to Sorts, Degrees and Exercise. This is the Method to be alway ready— *So an* <sup>2 Pet. 1.</sup> *Entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly* <sup>5, 11.</sup> *into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Let Death then arrest one never so suddenly, yet blessed is that *Servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.* Thus work therefore whiles it's Day, for *the Night cometh where-* <sup>John 9. 4.</sup> *in no Man can work.*

8 Obs. The *Wife* ought to be the *Desire of the Husband's Eyes.*

This is the Epithet and Description of *Ezekiel's Wife*, which argued a great Gift from God, a wise Choice by *Ezekiel*, and a good and agreeable Temper and Behaviour in the *Wife*. All Men ought to make Choice of such as are likely to be so; and not rashly, or from Covetousness, or other mean Considerations, take a foolish, graceless, froward or unagreeable Person, into this Relation. On the other  
F hand,



hand, Wives should so behave themselves, as to be pleasing in the sight of the Husband ; for their mutual Usefulness, Safety and Comfort are concern'd herein. Husbands also should account their own Wives desirable ; and so carry it, as to encline them to become acceptable, and encourage them when such. An Husband is  
 Pro. 5. 18, allowed, yea commanded, to *rejoice in*  
 19. *his Wife, and be ravished with her Love.*

Tho I enlarged no further in this Sermon on this Observation, yet I think it not unuseful to add some things I had Occasion to mention in another Place, from this part of the Text, *the Desire of thine Eyes.*

1. People designing Marriage should ~~make~~ choice of such Persons, as are likely to be desirable, and pleasing to them. So far *Sampson* was in the right, when he  
 Judg. 14. said, *Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well.*  
 3. It's a great *Snare* to marry such whose Person, Temper, or Behaviour, are alienating, or unlikely to endear. For it's hard to *esteem* a Yoak-Fellow, where there's nothing *valuable*, or delight where there is nothing lovely. It's dangerous, or at least uncomfortable, to be forced always to reason and plead one's self to a due Behaviour to Wife or Husband. Wisdom  
 wou'd

wou'd direct People to be *sure* of that in a Yoak-fellow, which will draw forth Love, cherish Affection, and deserve Esteem. But it's the height of Folly, not to avoid every one, where you find that which is sure to breed Dislike, procure Contempt, and cause a Coldness and Weariness of each other. Here's no Likelihood to find the Desire of the Eyes.

*Quest.* What are those things which are likely to *hinder* Husband and Wife from being the *Desire of the Eyes* to each other?

*Ansiv.* In the general, Those things which cause a *great Unsuitableness* between them. But there is such Variety in People, that it's hard to instance any things, which will have the like Effect on all Persons; for that's agreeable to one, which is not so to another. However I will hint some Particulars.

1. Any outward *Defect* or *Deformity*, to which you still feel an unsubdu'd Aversion, before Marriage is consummated. Some can chearfully bear with that Face, Figure or Behaviour, which another loaths. He that can take delight in a Person, notwithstanding a Blemish, or Defect, runs no great risque; but such as cannot, do lay a Net for Satan to use with

Gen. 29. Advantage. *Leah's tender Eyes* lessen'd her  
17, 30. alway in *Jacob's Affection*.

2. *Violent Passion, Frowardness, or ill Nature*, unless you are sure your Prudence and Patience can render these easy to yourselves, and safe to your Family. The continual *Droppings* of a contentious Wife (or Husband) will hardly encrease Love; nor one be much pleas'd, when forc'd to the *Corner of a House-Top*, to avoid the Brawls of a scolding Wife. Such a Husband will be as uneasy to a Wife. Never disregard a good Nature, or at least an agreeable Temper, in the Person you take into this near Relation.

3. *Great Weakness of Understanding*, if your Temper leads you to delight in ingenious Persons, and to despise all others.

If that be your *Genius*, scarce any thing will put you more to it, than to keep up an Esteem of Husband or Wife, when their Folly is at every turn discover'd. *Prudence* is a great Ingredient in that  
Prov. 19. Wife, who is a Blessing from the Lord;  
14. and much more in a Husband: But either will be apt to think themselves expos'd by the others Dullness and Indiscretion.

4. *Ungodliness*, if you are truly pious.



If you are graceless, your *Like* may please you above a better Person. Whiles you are spiritually dead, the want of a spiritual Life in a Yoak-Fellow, will be little minded. Two *dead* Carcasses can be together without Offence ; but a graceless Husband or Wife, will be a grievous Burthen to a *renewed* Mind, and a Plague to their Off-spring. When God converted a *Corinthian* Husband, how uneasy did an *unbelieving* Wife prove ? And as uneasy <sup>1 Cor. 7. 13, 15.</sup> was the unbelieving Husband to the *converted* Wife. Be sure they would not have chosen such had they been Christians before Marriage.

Therefore be afraid to match with a wicked Person. Their Vices ought to deter your listening to the greatest Inducements ; for what a *Torment* will it prove, to think your own Flesh hates God, and is abhorred by him. Will you long *esteem* the Devil's Image, or be *safe* or *easy* where he ruleth ? What a *Loss* and *Grief* will it be, to want that Help and Excitement which a gracious Yoak-fellow would afford, by Prayer, edifying Discourse, and good Example ; much more to be solicited, to *curse* God, as *Job* was <sup>Job 2. 9.</sup> by his Wife ? It will be *afflictive*, to be denied the Advantage (in so near a Relation)

tion) of uttering the Moans of your own Souls, and imparting your Experiences and Comforts.

Godliness oft renders the Wife hateful to the ungodly Man, and the Husband to the ungodly Woman. What Disputes and Brawls must arise between such? When different *Opinions* abate the Quiet, and diminish Love, where both are *godly*: but above all, the very *Soul* of the better Relative (as well as their Off-spring) is in danger to become worse, if not *wicked*, by ill Example, Discouragements, Temptations, and a desire to please. *Solomon's* Wives turn'd his Heart from God. Infection is more easily communicated than Health. The Bad is not so easily reformed, as the Good corrupted; because Sin has much to be-friend it in all of us; the Power whereof is daily seen, in many hopeful Persons becoming irreligious by bad Husbands and Wives. *Parents* and single Persons in Treaties of Marriage, would shew less *Unbelief*, and more of the Power of Godliness; if, *In the Lord*, were justly the Posy of the Wedding-Ring, and chiefly regarded in Matrimony.

1 Cor. 7.  
39.

5. *Great Inequality in Age*, unless you are very certain of answerable Temperance.

Satan oft gets Advantage hereby, and the Conjugal Affection of one or both is frequently

quently lost. Therefore if you marry one much younger than your self, you had need to be well assur'd of the Sobriety of their Temper; if one much older, be assur'd of your *own*.

I have set before you what you should ward against before you marry. If you venture on these, you must vainly hope to find the *Pleasure of your Eyes* in a married State. Many miserable Matches may warn you from suffering Covetousness to bribe you, or Ambition to tempt you, or Importunity to force you, or Fancy to bewitch you to a Disregard of these Cautions. But if loud Warnings avail not, dear bought Experience will convince, that neither Estates, Titles, nor the Gratification of a vain Fancy, will long maintain Affection, or prevent Mischiefs, when you betray your selves into these Hazards.

And yet how many Parents sell the Health, the Comfort, the Peace, yea the *Souls* of their Children, for a little Pelf, when they dispose of them in Wedlock? and too few Children are advis'd by such Parents as would direct more religiously and prudently.

2. *Married* Folk ought to esteem, delight in, and desire each other. The  
Wife



Wife should be the Desire of the *Husband's* Eyes, and the Husband the same in the *Wives* Eyes. When it's thus, you enjoy the great Blessing of a married State. On many Accounts that State needs this Blessing, and without this, its bitter and dangerous. Disagreement and Dislikes will embitter all other Comforts. You are commanded to rejoice in each other; but this is impossible, if *Love* be altogether wanting; for that's the strong Excitement, *Live joyfully with the Wife whom*

Prov. 5. 18  
Eccl. 9. 9. *thou lovest.*

3. Married Persons shou'd be wise, and careful so to contrive and order things, that they *may be desirable* in each others Eyes. Neglects in this will disappoint you of that Blessing, you had well prepared for in a *right* Choice. A due Observation of it may prevent the expected Mischiefs of an *ill* Choice, and so far rectify it. This Direction has two parts.

1. So manage things, as to be desirable *to your Toak-fellow.*

Avoid every thing that may offend or nauseate. Beware of what may expose you to Contempt or Dislike. Order your Tongue, Behaviour, and all your Ways, as may best create Love, and procure Esteem? Would you be *loved*? Strive

to be lovely? Would you be esteemed?

See that you be, and do what's va-

luable. If you are a *Nabal*, will *Abi-*

*gail* honour you? If you bid *Job* curse God,

he'll say, you talk as a foolish Woman.

Let the Wife in all lawful things therefore

approve her self to her Husband's Liking,

and sollicitously *care to please him*, the same

is the Husband's Duty; and not to be bit-

ter, insolent, vexatious or foolish, but

*dwell with his Wife according to Knowledge.*

Many of both Sexes forfeit Respect by

debasing themselves, and must not you

bear the Blame, if you are less desired,

when you render your selves undesirable.

Folly and Imperiousness will bring Con-

tempt and *Wrath*. Be and do what's pro-

per to your Place and Relation, and it's

probable you shall be esteem'd and lov'd;

if not, the Fault's not *yours*, and you'll

find *Favour* with God, and Peace *within*.

2. Watch your *own Minds*, and do your

utmost to make your Yoke-fellow *desirable*

to you.

Do not strictly observe each others

Weaknesses, unless they be removeable,

and with a Concern to redress them; in-

stead of ruminating on their *Faults*, oft

think of what's valuable and praise-wor-

thy. Has he or she true Grace? Let that

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1 Sam. 25.

25.

Job 2. 10.

1 Cor. 7.

34, 35.

Col. 3. 19.

1 Pet. 3. 7.

Eph. 1. 18.

cover the want of Beauty, for it's far more excellent; and if such as have it be despis'd, it's a Contempt of *Christ* in one of his Members. Is there good Nature and Affection? That must cover the Defect of *Wit* and brighter Parts. Should Husband or Wife be so unhappy as to be possess'd of none of these, yet consider it's *my* Husband, this is *my* Wife, even this puts the Conscience under Bonds to a good Carriage, and to as much Love as is possible to be rais'd by Prayer, Prudence, Consideration, and Confinement of conjugal Affection from *all others*. It's *my own Flesh* by God's Ordinance, and being such, it must be *loved and cherish'd*. Who neglects his own Arm, because it's weak, wither'd or wounded?

Eph. 5. 28.

They are the Persons you received into this near Relation. If they have been unagreeable *before* Marriage, as to Person, Humour, or Parts, bear it now with the more Contentedness, because it's the natural *Fruit* of your indiscreet Choice. If by any *Providence* they are *since* become less suitable, to be discontented, is to quarrel with the *Hand of God*, and add to the Calamity of the *Innocent*. If their *graceless* State be your Grievance, endure it with the greater Submission, as it is the Punishment of your sin-

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sinful Choice, if you were *then* a Convert :  
 And if you were converted since, let the  
 Sense of God's distinguishing Grace induce  
 you to Pity and a tender Carriage. But  
 be it before or since, it's your Duty and  
 Interest to do your utmost for their Re-  
 covery, and avoid whatever you know in  
 your self a Hindrance to it. If you suc-  
 ceed, you will have the Comfort of *living* 1 Pet. 3. 7.  
*as Heirs together of the Grace of God*, to  
 your own Benefit, and that of Posterity.  
 If you succeed not, their dying miserable  
 will cost you *Sorrow* for them, but no  
 piercing Reflections on your own sinful  
 Neglects.

I hope some Readers may improve, and  
 none misinterpret this incerted Digression,  
 tho less proper for a Funeral Discourse.

9 *Obs.* Husband and Wife, however de-  
 sirable, must certainly *be separated by Death*,  
 and it may be suddenly.

The Band between them holds till then,  
 but Death dissolves it, notwithstanding the  
 strongest Desires to continue together.  
 Great Affection makes a Separation to be  
 felt like a tearing Limb from Limb ; but  
 a wise Providence indulgeth not Creatures  
 fond Desires, but fixeth the *Bounds* of our  
 Satisfaction by Rules more sure and fit  
 than we would prescribe. He knows *how*

long it's safe to yield Comfort by one Channel; and when it becomes dangerous to continue the same way, least by *inordinate* Affection we might be ensnared, or to *prevent* a Disappointment which he foresaw by a Change of Disposition or Behaviour. Therefore when the Reason for Separation is become *ripe*, he spares no longer, however entreated, and oft so surprizeth by a *quick* Dispatch, that there's scarce Room for Prayer.

*Inf.* Husbands and Wives should live together, as they who *may soon be separated*.

This is Wisdom, and will be so accounted by the Thoughtful, when a Separation is made; for this will reduce your roving Minds, and shew the Folly of taking such a Satisfaction in each other, as if you must never part. This will convince you of the Sin of all that undue Behaviour which is much cherish'd, by not foreseeing those Reviews that cannot be avoided. Therefore so moderate your Affections, that the *Survivor* may neither become useless or scandalous by excessive Sorrow; nor be tormented with Self-Accusations, that their *excessive* Love procured the Death of the Deceased: And neglect not such a circumspect Behaviour, as to avoid any thing  
that

that must give bitter Thoughts, whether you be the dying or surviving Persons, for both will be forc'd to reflect on your Mis-carriages, the one when dying, the other afterwards.

Must you part so soon! then improve each other for Heaven, with a Diligence becoming the short and uncertain time of doing this, and the Vanity of wishing you had done *more* after Death has made a Separation. Nor will it be alway unseasonable to mind each other, that a time of parting will come; for this will excite *Diligence* in your mutual Duties. And if you have *Children*, you'll be more intent to train them up for God, to whose Care the dying must commit them. Nor will such Discourses be unuseful to a better Preparedness to bear the Loss, when one shall be removed. This leads me to the Third General Head.

III. God's Charge to the Prophet, as to his Behaviour upon the Death of his Wife; *Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, nor thy Tears run down.*

All the Changes of Life have their *proper* Duties, and in such Duties we ought to exercise our selves; for those *Changes* are Opportunities for, and Calls to such Duties. One part of the Duty upon this Oc-



Occasion, if the Prophet's Case had been left common with others, was to mourn in a godly sort. The Tokens of Sorrow Lev. 21. 2. are allowed the *Priest* for near Relations, tho not for others; there is a *time to weep*, but when is it seasonable, if not at the Death of a desirable Wife? Sorrow at such a time is necessary from the innocent Instincts of Nature; it disposeth to hear and obey God's Voice by the Stroke; and not to mourn, would be to *despise the Chastisement of the Lord*.

Therefore, either *Ezekiel* was forbidden only the *outward* Marks of Sorrow; or it was a positive *extraordinary* Precept, with *supernatural* Assistance, enabling him to observe it: And so it was enjoind on him as a *prophetick Sign* to serve a peculiar Purpose, and not to be a Rule to *others*.

But tho we are not oblig'd to forbear all Mourning as he was; yet what God said to *Ezekiel* suggests to us a *Moderation* in our Grief, and prohibits *excessive* Mourning under the Loss of the best of Wives. Due Limits are prescrib'd to all Men, but especially to *Ministers*, because they are by their *Example* to confirm the Truth of the Doctrine of *Submission to God's Hand*, and not tempt People to think it's impracticable by *any*; and that therefore either it's no Command

mand of God, or none can feel that Power in Religion as to comply with it.

10 *Obs.* *Excessive* Sorrow must be avoided, tho the *dearest* Relations are taken away.

Sorrow is allowed in proportion to the Loss, but Religion and Reason set the Bounds which ought not to be exceeded.

*Let him who weeps be as if he wept not, for the Fashion of this World passeth away.* Mourn with the Indifference becoming dying Men, for dying things under God's Disposal. 1 Cor. 7.  
30.

*Quest.* When is Sorrow excessive?

*Aus.* Sorrow is excessive, when attended with *fretting* Thoughts against God; when it hinders a thankful *Sense* of remaining Mercies; when it indisposeth to all *Delight* in God, and his Covenant-Blessings; when it unfits for the *Worship* of God, or the Duties of one's Place; when it so disorders the Mind, that it cannot attend to God's Voice by the Rod, and the Considerations which should relieve us under it; when it impairs the Reason or the Body, by its Intenseness, or too long Continuance. No Benefit we received by our Relations, no need we can have of them hereafter, no Circumstance in their Death will justify such Excess. Prov. 19. 3  
1 Chron. 7. 22, 23.  
2 Cor. 2. 7.  
Gen. 37.  
Job 17. 7.

Sorrow must be esteem'd *immoderate*, when it produceth such Effects; for this

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exceeds the Rule God prescribes, and is so provoking in his Sight, that for a Punishment thereof, he oft with-holds his Support, adds *fover* Afflictions, and permits *Satan* to take Advantage by Mens excessive Sorrow, to tempt them to Atheism, Self-Murder, and other Evils.

*Repr.* This may well reprove excessive Grief for dead Relations: Tho inordinate Sorrow for dead Friends passeth with most for a small Sin, if not innocent, yea, applauded and indulg'd as a good-natur'd and kind thing. Nevertheless it shews great Weakness of Soul, and includes a World of Sin; for excessive Sorrow is *Impatience* to a high Degree. It proceeds from inordinate *Self-Love*, and an extreme Affection to Creatures, and the things of *this World*. It argues either a Disbelief of a Providence, or a great *Dislike* of its Methods, as foolish, unjust and cruel. There's a Mixture of foolish Softness and Pride in him who is guilty, for he cannot bear what's common to Men, but thinks he deserves to be exempted from the common Lot, and yet can seem to relieve himself by *useless* Complaints, tho he knows he is past hope of recovering what he has lost. In proportion to the Excess of Sorrow, God is less loved as the *Supreme Good*, he

is



is *distrusted* as unable to repair or sanctify the Loss, and unthankfully slighted, as shewing no Kindness in Benefits still enjoy'd, and to have done his worst, in taking away that *one* which is removed. Ought not a serious Christian dread what's so sinful and near to Madness? Must not the Guilty blame themselves, and fear the Issue?

*Exh.* You the Relations of the Deceased, set *Christian Bounds* to your Sorrow.

I confess, that Stroke which took her away, gives a deep Wound to *many*. The *Husband* is deprived of a desirable Wife, whom he greatly affected as such, and still found growing Reason for it.

The godly *Parents* have lost a lovely Daughter, who commended their pious Education and Example by her religious Course, as well as dutiful Behaviour, upon Account whereof they loved her *more and more*, as her Life was lengthned.

*Brothers* and *Sisters* are separated from a delightful useful Sister, with whom they lived in cordial Amity, to their mutual Comfort and Advantage.

A poor *Infant* is the greater Loser, because so young as not to know her Fitness and Concern to promote his godly Education; nor further benefited by her as to his chief Interests, than as her own Covenant-Title, her sincere Dedication of him,

and her many recorded Prayers for him, are available.

*Sorrow* is unavoidable, and a Duty, where a *just* Sense of this Rebuke prevails; nor can it be confined to Relations, wherein all of her intimate Acquaintance are Sharers.

But it's not so necessary to justify your *moderate* Sorrow, as to warn you against *Excess*; allow not that, suffer it not insensibly to steal upon you. God has smitten, who cannot injure you. He intends your spiritual Good, which you will not fail to experience, if you are teachable. You may by this Surprize be help'd to live and die *better*, and God come to possess that of your Affection, which it may be exceeded towards her, or at least that of it which she is now above receiving.

When you weep, let the *saltest* Tears be spent for every Fault, that upon present Enquiries you find to have *provoked* God, to remove this valuable Comfort; *lose not* this afflictive Season, by neglecting that Search at present, for you may better discover such Provocations *now*, than when she was pleasantly enjoy'd; and a *godly* Sorrow for what you become convinced of, worketh *not* Death, but a *Repentance unto Life*.

2 Cor. 7.  
10.

Overlook not the Comfort which God by her dispens'd to you whilst she lived.

Many

Many have enjoy'd less in a far longer Life than hers, which exceeded not more Years than twenty five. Yea how many in that short compass have dishonour'd Religion, and broke the Hearts of some of their best Relations.

Watch especially, that you *sorrow not as without Hope*; for tho her Death was *sudden* (well at Noon, and dead in the Evening) yet she long expected and prepared for it. It's true, she is *taken away*, but she continued the Desire of your *Eyes* to the *last*, and Christ has taken her to *himself*, and will at his glorious Appearance *bring her with him*, to re-unite the Body in a Meeting for heavenly Places, where she (and you, if faithful) shall *be ever with the Lord*.  
*Comfort one another with these Words.*

1 Thes. 4.

13.

Ver. 14.

V. 17, 18.

You who were most intimate with her, are fully perswaded of this. And must not that restrain Sorrow within Christian Bounds? Unless you indulge that *Self-love* which regrets her present Happiness; for by Death a Believer is immediately cleans'd from all *Sin*, released from *Sorrow*, highly improv'd in the Divine Image (that truest Loveliness) and advanced to those Sights, Employs and Enjoyments *above*; of which the best are *incapable* in our present State. Nor is your Hope concerning her without a satisfying *Reason*, when her Abhorrence



of being thought better than she was, the Honesty and Plainness of her Temper, cause her Intimates proverbially to say, *That they who knew her, were sure to know the worst of her.*

She renounced and despised the *World*, (that common Rival with God) and took God, Christ and Heaven for her *Portion*; here her *End* and *Heart* were fix'd. And as a means of greater Safety and Improvement therein, she prefer'd a godly *Minister* for a Husband, before any other Person, with far greater Advantages as to *this World*. Nor was she disappointed, for both Grace and spiritual Comfort did grow exceedingly.

In that *relation* she was faithful and affectionate, forward to receive good Advice, delighted in conversing with her Husband about *divine* Matters, whereby both were improv'd, and their Endearment increased, in proportion to what they saw of God in each other: Yea she was a Spur to his Diligence, as well as a Refreshment in his Labours. She was ever *ready* to be inform'd in all things wherein Duty and Conscience were concern'd, and as stedfastly *resolv'd* in following what was *right*. The Habitation of *God's House* was her Delight. On all the Ordinances there administred, she attended with great Solemnity, and Care to *profit*.

Before her Admission to the *Lord's Supper*, she (to the great Joy of her Husband)

gave

gave an affecting Account of the State of her Soul, and made most satisfying Discoveries of her *Repentance* from the Heart, a *Faith* in Christ, resolved upon any thing for the Enjoyment of *him*; a Consent to the *whole* of the Gospel-Covenant, with a Surrender of her self and all to God in Christ. Whereupon with mutual Tears of Tenderness and Joy, they afresh resolv'd to walk together to Heaven, and watch over one another in whatever related thereto. This she fulfilled, by being a faithful Monitor of whatever was amiss in him, a patient Sufferer under great Pain, and a sincere Observer of God's Precepts. The *last* Sacrament she was very earnestly desirous to receive, because, as she said, *It may be the last that I may ever receive.*

Her Value for *Baptism* was such, that she *presented* her former Child, and intended to do the same on *this* very Day for her last Child. The reason she gave for presenting the Child with her *own* Hands at that Ordinance, was, that thereby she laid claim to her *own* Share in the Covenant-Favour, and should more sensibly *bind* her self to his Christian Education. But instead of publicly dedicating her Child, she with the Forecasts of Heaven, solemnly surrender'd her *own* Soul to God thro' Christ Jesus, in whom she *trusted*, and is gone to that happy Place where her Husband and she usually agreed to *meet*, when they were *parting* for any time.

Her Death was sudden, yet it was long expected.

died, and of late her Apprehensions of its Nigh-  
ness were more remarkable, and observ'd by  
many. These Thoughts of its near Approach  
abated not her *Chearfulness*, tho they quicken'd  
her Preparation, saying, *There was nothing in  
Death so much to be fear'd as Unpreparedness, and  
it was the Height of Madness to have any thing to  
do at that time, when meer dying was work enough.*

Being the Night before her Death, discours'd  
of the *more* blessed Society above, than that for  
which alone of all worldly things she could be-  
come willing to *stay here*, with a Mixture of  
Smiles and Tears, acknowledg'd, that *where Evi-  
dences for Heaven were clear, and some true Forecasts  
of it, it rather requir'd some Patience and Submission  
to tarry out of Heaven so long, and all that's lovely  
or desirable in any Creature, comes from, and is to  
be found in the God we go to, infinitely beyond  
what it can be in any Creature.*

The *Communion* she enjoy'd with God (as her  
chief Good) in this lower World, was so vitally  
*relish'd*, as to create a Longing for its full Enjoy-  
ment, tho by a Separation from a *Husband*, in  
whom she delighted to the *utmost* Bounds of  
Lawfulness. She was taken away not by Force,  
but with a *full* Consent, her Desires being strong-  
ly rais'd to the *Mansions* prepar'd by her best be-  
loved *Jesus*, and *mortified* to the Honours, Plea-  
sures, Riches, and all the vain Gayeties of this  
*lower World*. Yea she oft desir'd, that the Apparel  
prepared for her Marriage were well wore out,  
that



that she might show the Difference between her own Choice and Compliance with Custom.

Death found her on the Wing for the *higher* Regions, and tho seemingly apprehensive of some *Respite*, yet still dropping Directions about her *Funeral*, as impress'd with a Perswasion that it could be at no *great Distance*. And so it prov'd, for tho she join'd with her Husband in Family-Prayer, and eat a Breakfast with him, who went from her to the publick Worship, unapprehensive of *any Danger*. Yea, after two Hours Rest she was chearful, and so well as to get up; but no sooner sat in her Chair, than she received the *Stroke*, by which in five hours she was taken away; taken from a World of Sin, Imperfection and Sorrow too, however sweeten'd by kind and tender Relations. O happy *Sabbath*! not only to be rid of all that's *grievous*, but to be receiv'd into the *Assembly of the Souls of just Men made perfect*, to join in their Solemnities, and share in their exalted Privileges with Faculties improv'd to a due *Meetness* for both.

The *Use* all of us should make of this Providence, is, to endeavour, by the Grace of Christ, to be so safe and prepared for *Eternity*, that the most *sudden* Death may neither endanger, nor disturb us. To promote this, I shall recommend two Passages uttered by our deceas'd *Sister*. One is, that *she was willing to know the utmost of her Duty, and the worst of her Condition*. The other is, that discoursing of the near Approach

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of the time of her Delivery, she said to a near Relation: *Fear no bodily Pains; one Pang of the Horror of Conscience is more intollerable than all the Pangs of Child-bearing.*

A believing Soul acting alway under the Power of these, may chearfully converse with Death, and bear its sudden Arrests in Peace; for Faith is best evidenc'd by *universal* Obedience: And that Hope is least likely to disappoint, when all that seems to make it suspicious is *impartially* examin'd; and none will be so watchful, to avoid all that disturbs our inward Peace (which all presumptuous Sin will do) as they who fear the Pangs of Conscience above the forest Pains. Such a one can hardly be bribed or affrighted to transgress. Our Sister's dread of an *accusing* Conscience was a great Help to her *walking circumspectly*, and *dying* with such Peace and Comfort. For this guarded and fortify'd her against *Temptation*; and whenever she *offended*, excited her Repentance, and hasten'd her Application to the *Blood of Christ* for Remission and Healing.

Believe it all of you, a vain Mind, a seared Conscience, presumptuous Hopes, and the Allowance of your selves in any willful Omissions or Offences, will fill you with Horror in a *dying* Hour, unless you are so harden'd by *Insidelity*, that nothing short of *Hell* can force you to consider. But if you have due regard to Conscience, *that Peace of God which passeth all Understanding*, shall keep your Hearts and Minds thro. *Christ Jesus.*

FINIS.

